



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

III.—*Notes on the Andaman Islands.* By ADMIRAL SIR EDWARD BELCHER. (From Notes by Lieut. S. A. ST. JOHN, H.M. 60th Regiment.)

[Read January 23rd, 1866.]

IN the year 1862 a paper on this subject was read before, and published by, the Geographical Society, under the title of "A Narrative of an Expedition to the Andaman Islands in 1857," by F. J. Mouat, Esq. On that occasion, the author of the paper had not himself been in personal or friendly communication with the natives, but obtained his information, as to their habits, from Doodnath Fewarny and another convict, who lived some time with them.

The notes which I have the honour of submitting to you were made by my nephew, Mr. St. Andrew St. John, lieutenant in Her Majesty's 60th regiment, stationed there, and who, from his assiduity in acquiring the Eastern languages, has obtained the post of Assistant Commissioner at Tongoo, in Burmah, under Colonel Phayre. His company was stationed at Ross Island, on the South Andaman, from whence he was in the habit of making excursions.

In bringing to your recollection what the state of the Andamans was, perhaps you will excuse my recapitulating the leading points of the able paper by Dr. Mouat, which will be found *in extenso* in the *Proceedings* of the Royal Geographical Society for January 1862. "Further Remarks on the Surface Currents of the Bay of Bengal," by J. A. Heathcote, Indian navy, which will be found in the same volume, treats on the Andaman Islands.

The Andaman Islands are situated between the 10° and 15° of north latitude and 92° and 94° of east longitude, a direct line from the western strait of Singapore and the outer reefs off Calcutta, cutting their northern extremity. They were first carefully surveyed by Lieutenant Archibald Blair, of the Indian navy, in 1789 and the following year. About the same time they were visited and examined by Colonel Colebrooke, Surveyor-General of India, who published an account of the islands in the fourth volume of the *Asiatic Researches*.

In 1789 formal possession was taken of the Andaman Islands by the Indian Government, and a small penal settlement, under the charge of Lieutenant Blair, was established at Port Cornwallis, near the southern extremity of the Great Andaman on its eastern coast.

For three years this colony had been healthy and prosperous when, in 1792, it was removed to a larger harbour nearly two degrees to the northward, on the eastern shore of the same island, in $13^{\circ} 28'$ north and $93^{\circ} 12'$ east. This harbour was also named Port Cornwallis, when the former was changed to Old Harbour, now Port Chatham or Blair.

In 1795 the settlement was visited by Colonel Syme. Port Cornwallis was subsequently visited in 1814, and selected as the rendezvous of the Ava expedition in 1824.

The Andamans were chiefly known to navigators from frequent wrecks, as well as for the noted hostile and savage propensities of the natives, defying every effort made to enter into friendly communication.

In 1840, the islands were visited by Dr. Helfer, for scientific purposes, but he was unfortunately murdered by a native immediately on his arrival. By a note in the narrative, we learn that "The widow of Dr. Helfer was the niece of Field Marshal Baron Bülow. Accompanied by Madame Helfer he landed, when a savage, concealed behind a bush, transfixed him with a spear. His lady, armed like her husband, drew a pistol from her girdle and shot the murderer on the spot."

On the 23rd November, 1857, the islands were visited by a commission sent from Calcutta, with the view of providing for the mutineers connected with the sepoy insurrection. Of this expedition, Dr. Mouat had the direction. They were conveyed in the Pluto iron steamer of light draught, of the Nemesis class, and well known in the Straits and Borneon transactions.

The author, Dr. Mouat, informs us of the difficulties he had to contend with in making progress; of the impenetrable thickets, jungles, etc., and of his complete failure in getting into communication with these people. . . . The narrative is very interesting, very short, and well worth perusal. I wish I could promise as much for the digest I have been able to form from the various letters of Lieutenant St. John. But the latest, distinctly drawn up on the occasion of a steam trip for official purposes, will be given in his own words. Lieutenant St. John, without preamble, sends me "Notes on the Andaman Islands, taken during a three days' steam trip", which run thus:—

I. The following notes were taken at the request of the Superintendent of Port Blair (Major Ford, M.S.C.), on the occasion of a geological *reconnaissance*, made in the settlement steamer *Diana*, along the eastern shores of the Andaman Islands, the main object being the search for limestone among the islands of the Archipelago and Diligent Straits (as mentioned by Dr. Mouat), also for pasture or fodder for cattle, and to open communications with a tribe called Bullawadders, said to inhabit the islands of the

Archipelago. To assist in this work, a few Burman and Malay convicts were taken with us, also some friendly Andamanese.

II. The expedition started at 11 A.M., on Monday, the 15th of May, 1865, and, after steaming quietly during the night, arrived off the south end of Strait Island (*vide* Lieut. Blair and Mouat's Chart), about 5 A.M. on the following morning, when we anchored.

III. The very southernmost extreme of this island is terminated by a light-coloured sandstone cliff. It is known to the Malays as the "White Rock", and contains a cave where the noted "birds' nests"* are procured. The boats were lowered, and we proceeded to the examination of this cave; but, although the water was sufficiently deep within the cave, we did not care to risk the boats; but, climbing up on the outside, made our way into it on hands and knees, over a ledge running along the side of the cave. Inside we found plenty of nests, but in bad condition, as they were full of young birds. The proper time, it appears, for taking the nests, is early in the year, when they are beautifully white and hard. We afterwards landed on the beach to the westward. No traces of Andamanese were observed, though there was a fine stream of water; but doubtless they cross over from the main island, as many traces of pigs were noticed. We examined another cave in an isolated rock, but found it possessed by bats.† Killed a beautiful green tree snake.

IV. Weighed anchor and steamed to the north, making a curve to the eastward, in order to avoid a coral reef which runs out from Strait Island (which from the peculiar growth, in patches, of some peculiar tree has the appearance of having been cleared), and passed into the channel between Guitar and Long Island, when, observing marks placed in the water on both sides (*viz.*, bunches of cane leaves on stakes), dropped the kedge and landed to examine. The two stakes on the Long Island side had evidently been placed to mark a sandy bottom between two reefs of rocks. There were no traces of the Malays having been on the shore, but deserted camping spots and an old Andamanese canoe were noticed. A little to the westward, the skeleton of a man bound up in cane leaves was discovered. It was lying on its back on a platform of sticks placed across the forks of a tree, about twelve feet above the ground, and had a wooden dish bound over the chest. From the absence of hair and clothes, we concluded that he must have been some Andamanese chief, who was now awaiting until having put off his coat of flesh, he might be restored

* Piedra Branca. Most of those so termed on coast of Borneo, from dung of birds.

† Do these bats prevent the swallows from building, or destroy their young? All the caves similarly examined by myself, in Borneo, were never inhabited by both together.—E. B.

to the bosom of his tribe. This mode of burial has never been observed in the immediate neighbourhood of Port Blair, as there the bodies are generally concealed in the earth until the bones are fit for use. Possibly the Andamanese may have changed their custom to avoid European sacrilege? The skulls, when clean, are painted red and slung around the neck, being used as a box for such small articles as can be put in through the spinal aperture; the smaller bones are made into necklaces, and the leg and arm bones are often stuck into the waist belts of the women. On steaming further into the channel, we observed four Andamanians in a canoe fishing; but, although both we and our tame Andamanese asserted most loudly that we were *mios* (friends), and held out great inducement in the way of “*rogo*” (pork), they would not approach us, but quietly poled the canoe away into the mangrove swamp. We anchored for the night in a small bay in the middle Andaman, about three miles north of Long Island.

v. In the morning, we commenced the examination of the southern point of the bay, where a steep and rocky shore seemed to offer promise of limestone; but, much to our disappointment, it proved to be the common igneous rock of former acquaintance, which, from its light colour, probably may have been mistaken by a person, who did not land and examine it, for limestone. We noticed the fresh footprints of natives in the mud, but were unable to draw them from their cover. An old camp was found, with a broken canoe and fishing net; search was also made for water, but without success. So, weighing anchor, we proceeded to the northward.

vi. The shore was found to be flat for about two miles, but succeeded by some rounded hills rising to an elevation of about fifteen hundred feet. They lie to the north-west of the little bay and are terminated abruptly at the sea-coast, and though steep, as cliffs, are yet thickly wooded. A little further to the northward the rocks begin to peep out from the dense foliage; and from an amphitheatre, near the summit of the hill, springs a beautiful limpid stream, which, leaping from rock to rock in its descent, forms, even in the dry season, a pretty little cascade. Landing about half a mile to the north, we discovered a large but deserted encampment, with a fine creek running between the hills into the interior. At the foot of the cascade some rocks were found which effervesced with muriatic acid, but Mr. Prince (our engineer) would not pronounce them limestone until he had examined them more satisfactorily.

vii. On awaking next morning, I found that we had been under steam for two or three hours and were nearing the Archipelago and South Button, ere reaching which the sharp eyes of our Andamanese discovered smoke to proceed from Outram Island, which

they immediately pronounced to indicate the presence of the ferocious Bullawadders ; but, as we wished to examine the South Button first, we merely took its bearings, anchoring close to the Button, a mere rock which does not deserve the term of island.

VIII. Here is a bird's nest cave, but it cannot be entered from the sea on account of the smallness of the aperture ; but it is entered at the summit of the island by sliding down the tendrils of a *figus*, and thence by an inclined wedge-shaped rock that seems to threaten to fall on one momentarily. The interior is narrow, but branches out in many directions, the swallows' nests occurring in every nook and cranny. The floor is covered with guano. This island has long been known to the Malays and Burmese as the "Split Rock". Tamarinds, plantains, and other productions, were found growing.

IX. Quitting the South Button, our course was directed for the spot where the smoke had been noticed on Outram Island. As we neared it, natives were observed on the beach, also a canoe lying off the edge of the coral reef. They did not evince as much alarm as is usual, but reconnoitred us from behind the rocks ; and having anchored the steamer, and stored the boat with provisions, we made for the shore. As we neared the shore, they motioned us to keep off, exhibiting, by their bows and arrows, no wish to communicate ; but upon our making them comprehend that we had food for them, a woman, afterwards found to have visited Ross before, came out from their concealment, and, desiring the men to lay down their bows and arrows, made signs for us to approach. On our landing, they at first exhibited a little shyness, but soon getting more friendly, took us to their encampment, when, as customary, we found most of their valuables and children removed to the bush. We discovered that they belonged to the race which inhabits the South Andaman, being recognised by our own Andamanese, and also having in their possession an iron pot. We were unable to induce them to accompany us ; so, having given them plenty of food, we returned to the steamer and pursued our homeward route along the coast, without discovering any further traces of natives.

As these notes were accompanied by short descriptions, and I would not introduce any matters which were not literally derived from personal observation, I wrote to his parents to give me a decided answer before I committed myself. And I am happy to say, that several other very interesting matters were extracted from his correspondence. Indeed, it occurred to me that, even if they were indirectly the cause of further question, resulting from discussion here, that it might evoke from others who succeed him distinct replies. I say others, because he has now gone to Burmah. He describes the climate as very healthy, although at first

relaxing to Europeans. "The day's march" was merely an expedition of his own, as he states, "he has been the only one to go into the interior"; and "he *saw* the dances performed". "These dances were performed when he went on shore with the friendly natives during the steam trip." He observes, "I dare say it would have delighted you to see me walking arm in arm on the beach with a savage naked as he was born? These natives are very funny fellows and clever, but not to be trusted: their character being exactly that of a spoiled child, so that you must always go about armed."

NOTES FROM A DAY'S MARCH INTO THE INTERIOR.

The People.—The Andamans are a short, thick-set race (about five feet high), and of a jet-black hue. Their features are generally those of the Negrillo, but vary in a most extraordinary manner, some having almost hooked noses. Their hair, when allowed to grow, is short and woolly, but the head is always kept closely shaved; some few allow a little on the upper lip. They possess no clothing beyond belts and cords made from twisted bark; the women wearing a leaf in front and a bunch of bark behind. They paint their persons in patterns with red and white paints; and when sick, cut the part affected all over with a sharp shell or bit of glass. Very little has been ascertained as to their marriage laws; but, as far as we have been able to make out, the man only remains with a woman until a child is born, and weaned, and then seeks another wife. They are excessively quick and clever, delighting in a hoax, so as to enjoy a good laugh over it. In disposition very affectionate, but, like children, angry when thwarted. They are passionately fond of tobacco, although in their wild state they do not smoke. They are not addicted to drinking spirits.

The South Island is believed to belong to four tribes under separate chiefs; these have their own districts round which they wander, never remaining long in one place, keeping generally to the sea-shore, and entering the jungle only to cross from one side to another. Their camps consist of a circle of huts under the trees just above high water mark; and these huts, at the best, consist merely of four upright sticks, two long in front and two short behind, just high enough for a man to sit under, and slightly thatched with cane leaves. Their food consists of fish, turtle, dugongs, shell-fish, cuttle-fish, and wild pigs. The latter abound throughout the islands, and are very good eating. They are small and peculiar to these islands. No larger animals are likely to exist, or their bones would most certainly have been found in their camps.

The Andamanese have always described four races, viz. :—

The Bullawadders, inhabiting the Archipelago

The Eāri-wadders, inhabiting the Middle Andaman.

The Jerriwadders, inhabiting the Rutland Island ;

The Bojan-ee-jidah, inhabiting the South Island.

The latter always describe the Bullawadders as friendly, but Eā-ri-wadders and Jerri-wadders as hostile, savage, and terrible with the bow.

On a voyage in the steamer round Rutland Island, the only Andaman native we saw belonged to the Bojan-ee-jedah tribe (the same as our tame Andamanese). We constantly questioned them on the subject, and they remarked, whenever a nice position for a camp was noticed, that they attributed it to the Bojan-ee-jidahs, all the bad places to the Jerri-wadders ; and from this we concluded that the true meaning of this latter term was as yet obscure, or that they had a tradition of a tribe coming from the Little Andamans or Nicobar Islands. He observes that, "The accounts of the natives of *Tierra del Feugo* resemble these people in many respects."

One of the most peculiar features in the character of the Andamans is their custom of dancing. As yet only two kinds have been observed—the common friendly dance, called jig-dah-dah (dah being only the noun termination, the real word is jig), which is generally performed at a meeting between the tribes ; and another (the name of which I have forgotten), which is performed every night. These dances consist in hopping violently on one foot, and swinging the arms backwards and forwards to the time of a song which is kept up by one man, the women clapping their hands loudly and joining in chorus. The time is very often beaten on what we call a dancing board ; that is, a hollow piece of hard wood in the form of an ancient shield, which being placed on the ground with the hollow downward, is stamped on by one of the party who keeps it steady by placing the other foot on the pointed end.

Places are changed constantly during these performances much after the manner of our country dances. The night dance seems to partake more of a religious character, and is kept up nearly the whole night, the song being always led by one of the chiefs or elders. The chiefs are always young or middle-aged men ; the old ones apparently retiring from office, and never partaking in the dance. On several occasions I have partially seen these dances ; but, on one occasion, had the opportunity of witnessing the complete performance.

We were in search of runaway convicts, and had anchored for the night in Macpherson's Strait. On the shore were several fires, which indicated the presence of Andamans. These we in-

tended visiting in the morning, with the view of inducing them to go with us to Ross. But we had scarcely made everything secure for the night before we heard shouts from the shore, which, as our own Andamanese declared, denoted their wish to come on board. Manning our boat, I pulled in the direction of the sound, and soon descried some dim outlines in the water at the edge of the mangroves; they were natives, who, immediately crowding into the boat, seemed delighted to make our acquaintance.

On returning to the vessel, we found that they were all men in a delightful state of nature, not even carrying a bow or arrow. They were soon engaged tucking into the food we offered them, and when replete, of course went in for a dance, greatly to our disgust, as we were much tired. Next morning we were visited by two of their own canoes, who requested us to visit their camp. I believe the invitation was intended for several days, but, as that would have proved too much of a good thing, we merely accepted it for a morning entertainment. I won their hearts by getting into one of their canoes and paddling about—in all probability the first exhibition they had witnessed of an European so engaged.

On reaching their camp we were each taken in charge. I was led off by one of the “swells” to his shed, and made to sit in the bosom of his family. I afterwards presented him with my shirt—then tinted of a lovely red, resulting from their frequent embraces. This red is the only thing one has to fear from them, as they are quite free from parasites, not having a stitch of clothes or a hair on their bodies. It is composed of a red kind of clay mixed with grease. The dance was soon commenced by the head man of our party of Andamanese, with a bow and arrow in his hand; the others sitting under their huts; myself in the middle, looking on and clapping hands. Our Andaman finished by leading out the women of the other party, who carried on the dance, which was finished by chiefs of the encampment. The dancing finished, two chiefs standing in the centre grasped each other by their right hands, and for a few minutes gazed steadily into each other’s eyes.

On our arrival, no articles whatever could be observed in the camp; but, by means of presents, we obtained some bows, arrows, earthen pots, and adzes. Their custom is to hide, on the approach of strangers, women, children and effects in the jungle.

Then follows a list of articles obtained, of which a small photograph was made, which will be given separately at the conclusion.

By his latest communication he observes that:—

They find it necessary to retain us here more as a moral than physical force, as there is little chance of any outbreak from the convicts, of which there are about 3500, Indians and Burmans,

living in a more comfortable manner than they would at home, gradually clearing the jungle and making gardens. The progress in this direction has been so successful, that, on the 12th of March last, he mentions "a grand vegetable show". It is a lovely spot and very healthy.

We live on Ross Island at the mouth of the bay, but it has been too well cleared of trees to be pretty. The other two islands are cleared and inhabited, as well as sundry points. The jungle on the main island is so dense, that it is impenetrable. The natives are not so bad now as formerly, and the clergyman, Mr. Corbyn, has learned a little of their language. They are very ugly, not unlike Hottentots. Major Ford is the superintendent, and there are about ten different officers. Their houses are first-rate and food good; in fact, *I* find it too civilised. There are no ladies at Ross Island, and only one at Viper Island, the wife of the native infantry officer.

I have been in the jungle frequently, but find it hopeless, on account of its density and the height of the trees; there are plenty of birds, if you could only shoot them. I go out frequently pig hunting in the jungle, and find it better for one's health than remaining at home: the sport is good, we run them with dogs, and then spear them. It is the only sport we have, and I have the honour to be the only Englishman who has taken to it. Excepting the Burmans, probably no one has seen so much of the interior as myself. It is a curious fact, that these savages make beautiful baskets, nets, and earthen pots, though the latter are rare. They are made like the ancient British, but thinner; and I also think it will be found that they are used for burial purposes, though very little at present is known of the habits of these people. I feel convinced that when thoroughly investigated some light will be thrown on the ancient remains in Europe.

Of the animals, he observes—at present a peculiar kind of pig and rats are found, although there were some footprints, supposed to be those of the tapir, observed some years ago. The bones of a recent dugong were found some short time since in an Andaman camp. He concludes with—an Andaman camp is composed of just two or three little huts perched between two or three trees above high-water mark, and near a water course. On the ground you will find old baskets beautifully made of cane, nautilus shells, skulls of pigs and turtle, a heap of cockle and other marine shells, and perhaps a dancing board, as described. They go quite naked, with the exception of a belt of cord round the loins and cords also round the wrists and ankles, frequently or generally a necklace of human bones round the neck. But they are not cannibals, as formerly supposed.

Arrows are of four kinds, viz.—

I. Broad iron head, moveable and attached to wooden shaft by a cord ; no feathers.

II. Long bamboo shaft, wooden head, with iron point, barbed ; no feathers.

III. Bamboo shaft, wooden point ; no feathers.

IV. Bamboo shaft, four wooden points ; no feathers.

Bows.—Very strong, broad, and flat inside, always in the shape of line of beauty ; *i. e.*, the lower part bent backwards (S shape).

The cord is made of twisted inner bark of trees.

A cord is worn on the left wrist to prevent the bowstring cutting it, as it snaps very close to the bow.

The arrow is held between the thumb and the second joint of the forefinger.

Pot.—Earthen ; not strong ; carried when travelling in a sling of cane.

Fishing Net.—Mesh similar to our landing net.

Fish Basket.—Constructed of cane beautifully woven ; it is carried over the shoulder, to collect shell-fish.

Adze.—A piece of iron secured into a wooden handle. No iron is found on the islands, except that which may be obtained from wrecks.

Shells are generally used for knives as well as shaving purposes.

Water Vessels.—Large cylinders hollowed out of wood.

Canoes.—Hollowed out of light trees (*Sterculiaceæ*), propelled in shore by long bamboos ; off shore, by small roughly-made paddles, similar to the sand-spade of children at watering-places. These canoes easily upset ; but all Andamanese swim like fish ; they soon right them again.

The nautilus-pompilius is used for drinking cups, and also for baling the canoes.